



FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

INSIDE

FNU

INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S LEADERS



Maria Salusalu and her son, Luke Ratulala Vereyali.

A Young Woman's Journey between Motherhood and Education

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

FROM a young age, Maria Salusalu grew up facing the trials and tribulations of life.

She was strongly supported by her grandmother. After her grandmother passed on, her mother's love was the main thing that kept her going.

Amid the challenges of life, the now 23-year-old, who is one of four siblings, secretly had a passion to pursue her education further, with a goal to assist her mother in catering to the needs of their family.

She made it her duty to pursue that dream and enrolled in the Fiji National University's College of Humanities and Education Bachelor of

Education (Secondary) (Geography and History) programme, based at the Natabua Campus in Lautoka.

"I've always been passionate about my subjects since I love geography and history, and I want to make a difference at home, especially by helping my mother," she said.

In her second year of studying, Salusalu became pregnant and pictured her whole world crashing; she lost hope and was afraid to deliver the news to her family.

Her son, Luke Ratulala Vereyali is now one-year-old.

"In my second year, I went for practicum when I was three months pregnant, and that did not stop

me from doing what I wanted to do since I got a good grade from the practicum," she said.

"My brother supported me in purchasing food for my son, and I also had to look for a job when my son was two-month-old to buy his needs. On top of that, I did not forget my duty as a daughter to my mother, so I would also help her out on the farm, which keeps us going."

Salusalu, a single parent, is now a third-year student and is content to have come this far in life.

"I also give credit to my very understanding lecturers, who allowed my son to sit in with me and my classmates at times during tutorial and lectures," she said.

She added that her son has given her extra

motivation to complete her studies and do well in life.

"My son is my biggest motivation and he is the reason behind who I am today. I know everything wasn't part of my plan, but God has a different plan, and I will continue to strive for success," she added.

"My goal is to focus on graduating first, become a very supportive parent to my son, and continue my studies."

Salusalu's advice to all women and girls is to continue pursuing your education.

The Tavua native from Nadelei Village currently resides in Nadi and is a former student of Nilsen College in Vatukoula.



FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The Fiji National University continues to maintain its Ranking with further improvement in overall scores.



Times Higher Education

WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 2

- Inclusivity and Diversity are Key Drivers of Productivity
- Minister Commends FNU's Sustainable Livelihood Project

Page 3

- FNU Calls for Collaboration to Bridge Hospitality Industry Gap.
- FNU Vice-Chancellor Calls for Action on Women's Leadership at Parliament Speaker's Debate.
- Dreams Delayed, not Denied!

Page 4

- Countless Benefits for Students Taking Up FNU's Hairdressing Programme
- Education is Key.

Page 5

- Professor Iji Walks on Top in the Research Field in Fiji.

Page 6

- FNU launches GEDSI and Action Plan 2024-2026
- Nakauvadra Draws Inspiration from Ratu Sukuna's Approach to Leadership.

Page 7

- Magele Ready to Fight NCDs.
- Ni-Van Student's Three-Year Sacrifice to Study at FNU Pays Off.

Page 8

- Masi, A Role Model for Many Students

UPCOMING EVENTS AND INTERNATIONAL DATES

• CMNHS Symposium

The College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences will host the Health Professionals Education Symposium at the Pearl Resort from 03 - 05 July. The theme for the symposium is *Fostering Pacific Health Learnings: Past Insights, Present Innovations, Future Inspirations.*

• 11 July - World Population Day

This day is celebrated to raise awareness on global population issues like family planning and gender equality.

• 15 July - World Youth Skills Day

World Youth Skills Day highlights the importance of equipping young people with the skills they need for employment, entrepreneurship, and contributing to a peaceful and sustainable future.

• 25 July - World Drowning Prevention Day

World Drowning Prevention Day is observed annually on July 25th. It's a global advocacy event that aims to raise awareness about the dangers of drowning and promote ways to prevent it.

• 28 July - World Hepatitis Day

It's a day to raise awareness about viral hepatitis, which is a group of infectious diseases that affect the liver.

• 30 July - International Day of Friendship

The International Day of Friendship is coming up on July 30th! It's a day recognised by the United Nations to celebrate the importance of friendship in people's lives and across cultures.

For feedback, suggestions and opinions, email Manager Public Relations and Communications, Ropate Robi on mprc@fnu.ac.fj

"Inclusivity and Diversity are Key Drivers of Productivity" - Tonawai



Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation (FCEF) Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Jonetani Tonawai.

By JENNIS NAIDU

Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation (FCEF) Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Jonetani Tonawai, stressed the importance of inclusivity and diversity as key drivers of productivity in today's rapidly evolving workplace.

Speaking at the Fiji National University's National Training and Productivity Centre's 2024 Breakfast Productivity session on the topic, *"Strategies for promoting productivity in the workplace while ensuring inclusivity and diversity,"* Tonawai highlighted the changing dynamics of workplaces, driven by technological advancements, artificial intelligence, and shifts in societal values.

"In this new landscape, productivity, inclusivity, and diversity must be aligned to achieve sustainable success," he said.

"It is no longer enough to simply focus on efficiency and output, we need to ensure every team member feels valued, heard, and included."

"An inclusive workplace is one where everyone feels they belong, their voices are heard, and they can bring their authentic selves to work without fear of discrimination or bias."

The productivity talk, held earlier this month in Suva, featured three impactful presentations from industry leaders: Hoalink Systems & Services Pte Ltd. Singapore Managing Director and Principal Consultant, George Wong; International Labour Organisation (ILO) Director, Martin Wandera; and Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation (FCEF) Chief Executive Officer, Jonetani Tonawai.

The head of FCEF called for comprehensive diversity training programmes that focus on actionable steps to create a more inclusive environment.

"Leaders must model inclusive behaviour, hold themselves accountable for fostering a diverse workplace, and prioritise leadership training in this area," Tonawai added.

"Encouraging employees to develop new skills and expand their knowledge fosters a more dynamic and adaptable workforce."

"By offering flexible schedules and remote options, we enable employees to achieve a better work-life balance, particularly for those who may have been previously marginalised in traditional office settings."

He concluded by emphasising the importance of creating platforms for diverse voices to be heard and celebrating diversity in all its forms.

"Prioritising inclusivity sets a tone for the organisation and encourages others to follow suit."

“Encouraging employees to develop new skills and expand their knowledge fosters a more dynamic and adaptable workforce.”

Minister Commends FNU's Sustainable Livelihood Project

By CHRISTAL KAPOOR

THE Sustainable Livelihood Project (SLP) offered by Fiji National University's (FNU) National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) has received much praise from the Minister for Health and Medical Services, Honourable Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu.

The Minister who was the Chief Guest at the recent SLP graduation ceremony in Taveuni, while speaking in the i-taukei language, thanked FNU's senior leadership team and the trainers who brought the programme to the garden island.

"I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Fiji National University, from its leaders and trainers in choosing Taveuni as the place for this SLP Training," said the Honorable Minister.

He also reminded the graduates on the importance of putting to good



Minister for Education and Chief Guest at the SLP graduation, Honourable Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu photographed with the Vice-Chancellor of the Fiji National University, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, the staff of FNU's National Training and Productivity Centre and the graduates of the SLP Programme.

use the different skills and knowledge that they have learnt in the 2 weeks and ensure that the training received will help them to secure employment.

"I hope you are able to start your own small businesses or help contribute to the village and society where you live in because of the training you have received from FNU," added Honourable Lalabalavu.

The Minister informed the graduates and attendees that education is endless, and the Coalition Government is there to support people in our society who need assistance in living more sustainable lives.

The 461 participants have successfully completed training in a variety of essential skills under the government-funded Sustainable Livelihood Project (SLP) which includes Wooden House Construction, Household and Sanitary Plumbing, Domestic Electrical, Solar Installation, Small Engine Repair, Cabinet Making and Joinery, Garment Construction, Screen Printing, Floriculture, Business Etiquette, and Fibreglass Boat Repair.

Call for Collaboration to Bridge Hospitality Industry Gap



Chief Guest and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Honorable Viliame Gavoka with the FNU Team and participants at the conference.

By GRACE WAQAWAQA

THE Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies (CBHTS) is urging for a coordinated effort between industry, government, and institutions to address the evolving needs of the tourism and hospitality sector.

Dr Asaeli Tuibeqa, Dean of CBHTS, highlighted this following the inaugural National Hospitality Conference hosted by the National Training and Productivity Centre this month.

"The hospitality landscape is rapidly shifting, demanding a change in education approach. Technology is driving innovation, creating a disconnect between traditional curriculum and the current needs and standards of the industry," said Dr Tuibeqa.

"Universities, the government, and the industry itself must work together to ensure graduates are equipped with the necessary hard and soft skills. Seminars and conferences have been a mainstay, but a more coordinated effort is needed to translate "talk" into action."

CBHTS takes its role as a major supplier of hospitality professionals seriously. Their participation at the recent conference signifies their commitment to collaborating with the industry.

"Fijian hospitality operates on a global stage. We compete in the international market. To make a significant impact, we are committed to preparing graduates for success in this dynamic industry," added Dr Tuibeqa.

"This will include upgrading facilities, programmes, and staff expertise. Additionally, we are forging strong industry partnerships with leading hotels and resorts to offer internships and graduate

trainee programmes, providing students with invaluable real-world experience."

CBHTS is further expanding its reach by bringing hospitality and tourism programmes directly to communities in Fiji.

"We are committed to empowering landowners and rural communities to participate in the industry's growth. Our Lekutu and Nacula-Yasawa teaching centres are a testament to this initiative."

Beyond quality control, Dr Tuibeqa added the approaches should delve into innovation and productivity for overall industry growth.

"We cannot be mindless of our problems and future. We also cannot be dependent on external solutions, models and 'medicines'. We have the deepest understanding of our own challenges and that is precisely why the solutions lie within ourselves."

FNU Vice-Chancellor Calls for Action on Women's Leadership at Parliament Speaker's Debate

By GRACE WAQAWAQA

PROFESSOR Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, Vice-Chancellor of Fiji National University (FNU), delivered a powerful call to action for greater women's leadership at the Parliament Speaker's Debate on Women Leadership: Empowering Women's Participation at all levels of Decision-Making.

Professor Nabobo-Baba emphasised the importance of recognising the full potential of women in Fiji.

She highlighted that neglecting women's contributions is akin to "killing half the forest."

"When we ignore 400,000 women with diverse intelligences (including those identified by psychologist John Gardner), you have cut away what God gave us, so it is very possible that we kill half the forest," said Professor Nabobo-Baba.

From her educator lens, Professor Nabobo-Baba stressed the importance of identifying and nurturing a child's strengths from a young age, regardless of gender.

"The duty of a parent and a teacher is to identify very early, the strength of a child. A child just needs one adult to believe in them."

In addition, she emphasised the significance of strong female role models, both historical and modern, in inspiring future generations and argued for increased educational opportunities and resources for women to reach leadership positions.

Professor Nabobo-Baba also called for a review of Fiji's legal framework to ensure it prohibits discrimination and promotes equal opportunities for women.

"The law has to change; constitutions have to change. All people must be given the right to be leaders if they choose to."

"The whole lot of us have the potential to make the world better place," she concluded.

"The law has to change; constitutions have to change. All people must be given the right to be leaders if they choose to."



FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba at the Speaker's Debate.

SPEAKER'S DEBATE
Women Leadership: Empowering Women

Dreams Delayed, not Denied!

By GRACE WAQAWAQA

AFFORDING an education is not a given, a harsh reality many Fijians, especially in rural villages face. Timoci Makoto and Maika Ratuwara, two young men from Navutulevu village in Serua, know this struggle all too well.

After completing secondary school, their education was put on hold. They returned to their village and worked alongside their families and their community, yet their dreams of higher learning never faded.

Fate intervened in the form of the Fiji National University (FNU) outreach team at their Serua Provincial Council meeting.

Ratuwara initially made the rounds to the FNU booth while delivering 'bu' (green coconut juice) to the guests. During a break, he approached the FNU team, brimming with questions about pursuing a career path aligned with his secondary school subjects.

For Makoto, news of the FNU team's presence in Navutulevu village spurred him to action. Documents in hand, he marched towards the FNU booth, his sights set on a future in agriculture.

"I am so grateful to FNU for bringing their services to our community. My questions were answered, my application for the Diploma in Agriculture submitted and I received my offer letter," said Makoto.

Makoto, an aspiring agriculturalist, will soon be pursuing a Diploma in Agriculture in Semester 2, while Ratuwara who dreams of mastering the art of plumbing and sheetmetal work will begin his Certificate in Plumbing and Sheetmetal from next year.

Their aspirations were as clear as the skies on the day: Makoto and Ratuwara dream of a future filled with quality education, fulfilling careers, and the ability to uplift their families.



Timoci Makoto.



Maika Ratuwara.

Countless Benefits for Students Taking Up FNU's Hairdressing Programme



By **NICOLETTE CHAMBERS**

THE Fiji National University's Certificate in Hairdressing (Level 3) programme is designed to provide many opportunities for students taking up the course, as well as for future intakes.

The programme, which falls under the FNU's College of Humanities and Education, develops the knowledge and skills of students in basic hair cutting, managing a salon, understanding hair products, colour design, permanent waving and relaxing, hairdressing designs and to meet the needs of the customers.

As per the demands of the industry, the programme also emphasises quality control concepts in theory and via practical methods and will prepare students to secure employment in hair salons, hotels, resorts and as entrepreneurs.

Hairdressing Instructor Jioje Aisea said apart from this, the students would have the benefit of becoming self-employed, finding

employment locally and internationally, and would practice environmental sustainability in the robust tourism industry.

"Upon completing this programme, the learners are empowered with various qualities which will enhance financial sustainability and turn job seekers into job creators," she said.

"The student will be able to progress to a higher level of qualification in the hairdressing programme."

She said there were plans for the department to develop the Certificate in Hairdressing (Level 4) programme, as well as the Diploma in Hairdressing programme.

Her advice to students wishing to take up the programme is – "This programme not only enhances the skills of hairdressing but also gives you the opportunity to become an entrepreneur during your journey at FNU as a learner because you get to experience the lifestyle of a hairdresser at the industry with two of our units in this programme securing work placement for you."

The Certificate in Hairdressing (Level 3) programme at FNU is designed to provide you with countless opportunities.

Education is Key

By **PRAVIN NARAIN**

EDUCATION is a never-ending process, says College of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Sciences (CMNHS) graduate Abinesh Prasad.

The 43-year-old graduated with the Postgraduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing.

"Education is important in life, and you can use it to change the world," he said.

"I am grateful to the Fiji National University (FNU) for providing the best education and training skills so we can use them in our daily lives and improve the health sector in Fiji."

"One should not compromise when it comes to education, and we need to continue with our education for a better future. I now have a diploma, a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing and Public Health, and a Postgraduate Certificate."

Prasad, a father of three, said he is part of the noble profession of helping people.

"I have been working at the Labasa Hospital for the past 20 years, and I have specialised in psychiatric nursing. This is a very challenging profession because it deals with people's minds, and when they have a mental illness, we help them and care for them.

"We are not aware of their minds, and one aspect is to read their minds before they come to us," Prasad said.

"Every year, we must upgrade our skills and knowledge, and we have to manage people and help them improve."

"During the study period, I had to be away from my family for six months as I was based in Suva, and it was hard to be away from my loved ones."

Prasad intends to pursue a Master's Degree at FNU in the near future.



CMNHS graduate Abinesh Prasad with his wife.

Professor Iji Walks on Top in the Research Field in Fiji

“

This recognition is a humbling honour not just for myself but especially because it places the Fiji National University (FNU) on the map as my research base.

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Fiji National University Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, Professor Paul Iji.

By PRAVIN NARAIN

PROFESSOR Paul Iji, a distinguished scholar with expertise in animal science and a background in agriculture, has been recognised as the leading researcher in Animal Science and Veterinary Science in the world. This achievement cements Professor Iji's position as a preeminent figure in the field.

Background

Professor Iji, a man whose heart beats in rhythm with the fertile soil, has found a second home in Fiji, where he was the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF) at Fiji National University (FNU). But his connection to agriculture stretches far back, rooted in the rich farmlands of his native Nigeria.

Born in central Nigeria, a region aptly named the Middlebelt for its geographical bridge between the country's north and south, Professor Iji describes his home state of Benue as the "Food Basket of Nigeria." Much like Fiji, Benue's tropical conditions allow a cornucopia of crops to thrive, from yams and cassava to rice, sorghum, sweet potatoes, and a vibrant tapestry of beans. This agricultural abundance wasn't just a national resource; it was Professor Iji's childhood reality.

"My father was the Village Headman, similar to a Fijian Turaga-ni-Koro. He led a large farming operation, and my elder brother now carries on that legacy as Chief. We worked incredibly hard but not necessarily smart. There had to be a better way. This realisation, this quiet seed of potential, blossomed into a determination to pursue agricultural studies, a path that would benefit not only his family but his entire community," he said.

Education

Professor Iji's impressive career in academia began in 1987, following a successful stint teaching agriculture and

biology at the secondary level. Since obtaining his Bachelor's degree, he has embarked on a remarkable journey that has seen him hold prestigious positions across four countries: Nigeria, South Africa, Australia, and now Fiji.

His dedication and expertise have propelled him through the ranks, culminating in his appointment as a full professor in 2014 at the University of New England in Australia.

Professor Iji's experience is a tapestry woven from teaching to research coordination, and leadership roles as Dean and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Currently, his focus lies on providing strategic direction in research endeavours.

"My undergraduate studies in Nigeria culminated in a first-class honours degree in Animal Sciences. Achieving the distinction of top graduate presented an exciting opportunity – the university planned to retain me and nurture my potential as an academic. However, fate intervened during this pivotal moment. The external examiner, a professor from a different university, was highly impressed and offered me a position at his own institution, the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University, one of Nigeria's oldest and most established universities," he said.

"I began my Master's programme in Nigeria, but an opportunity arose to pursue another Master's degree at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. This pattern repeated itself with my doctoral studies. I commenced my PhD in Nigeria but ultimately secured a scholarship to complete another PhD at the University of Adelaide in Australia.

"These enriching experiences equipped me with a remarkably broad and multifaceted perspective. My expertise encompasses both tropical and temperate agriculture, and I have delved deeply into multiple sub-disciplines of agriculture at

the postgraduate level."

Research Ranking

Professor Iji's relentless pursuit of knowledge and dedication to research have garnered him an impressive accolade. For more than four years now, Professor Iji has been listed among the top two percent of the world's most impactful researchers. This year, Research.com, a respected platform, recognised him as the top researcher in Fiji and a remarkable 1156th globally within the field of Animal Science and Veterinary Science.

"This recognition is a humbling honour not just for myself but especially because it places FNU on the map as my research base. It fills me with optimism that FNU's researchers will continue to excel, propelling us towards becoming a renowned centre for research across various key disciplines," Professor Iji shared.

"This recognition serves as a powerful message to prospective students and scientists. It signifies that our research efforts are led by a world-class researcher, ensuring rigorous research processes. Anyone seeking to study or collaborate with us can expect exceptional mentorship and dedicated attention."

"This is merely the beginning. I believe this recognition will inspire both students and colleagues to strive even harder, propelling FNU to achieve greater heights. FNU boasts a remarkable pool of dedicated early-career researchers across various colleges. I urge them to rise to the challenge and contribute to our collective success."

Future Plans

"While I am honoured personally, it's even more significant because it places FNU in the spotlight as my research institution. This achievement fills me with immense optimism for the future of FNU's research community. I have no doubt that

our researchers will continue to flourish, solidifying FNU's reputation as a leading centre for research across various key disciplines," he said.

"This achievement serves as a powerful magnet for prospective students and researchers. It signifies that FNU's research is led by a world-class scholar, guaranteeing rigorous research processes. Anyone choosing to study or collaborate with us can expect exceptional mentorship and unwavering support."

Message to Students

Professor Iji, a leading researcher and advocate for fostering a collaborative research environment, encouraged students to pursue advanced education and broaden their horizons. He further stressed the importance of knowledge sharing within the research community.

"Researchers are encouraged to engage in a more open exchange. This extends beyond the sharing of research equipment; the dissemination of valuable information can significantly benefit colleagues. Collaborative endeavours are the cornerstone of elevating research as a whole," he said.

"We possess expertise in distinct areas, and by uniting these strengths, we can achieve far greater effectiveness. This collaborative spirit extends to student supervision as well.

"Supervisors can learn from each other's experiences and approaches. Openly sharing knowledge and resources is not a sign of weakness but a testament to collective strength. Isolated research efforts have limitations; some projects necessitate the combined efforts of hundreds of researchers. Without collaboration, such groundbreaking work simply cannot be achieved."

FNU launches GEDSI and Action Plan 2024-2026



FNU Senior Leadership Team with FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba DFAT Counsellor Human Development Sophie Temby and APTC Executive Region.

By PRAVIN NARAIN

IN a significant step towards creating a more inclusive learning environment, the Fiji National University (FNU) has launched the Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Strategy and Action Plan 2024 – 2026, aligning with the University’s 2024-2026 Strategic Plan.

FNU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, said the launch of the GEDSI Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2026 is a living document that will evolve alongside the ever-changing needs of our community.

“The strategy will enable Fiji National University to be a diverse and inclusive academic institution that provides equal academic opportunities to diverse people. Embracing marginalised people such as people with disability, gender diverse people, and people from ethnic minority groups and recognising the intersectionality

of people,” Professor Nabobo-Baba said.

“The document will also enable FNU to be an industry leader as an equal opportunity employer through GESDI-sensitive policies and infrastructure, ensuring dignity for staff in all their diversities.

“We will establish robust channels for regular communication between the colleges, staff, and students, fostering a sense of shared ownership and creating a truly inclusive learning environment. Targeted workshops and training programmes will be implemented to disseminate GEDSI principles across all levels of the university. Additionally, we will actively seek strategic partnerships with external organisations dedicated to promoting gender equality, disability rights, and social inclusion.”

Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) Regional Operations Director, Carmel Nee, said the Gender Equality Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Strategy and Action Plan is a significant achievement in collaborative efforts of the Fiji National University and Australia Pacific Training Coalition and the Department of

Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

“The launch of the FNU GEDSI Strategy and Action Plan marks a significant step forward in our ongoing commitment to promoting gender equality, disability, and social inclusion,” Nee said.

“Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems play a vital role in equipping individuals with the skills they need to succeed in life and the workforce. Ensuring equity within TVET systems is essential for providing equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender or background.”

The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Counsellor Human Development Sophie Temby said Australia is proud to support the GEDSI launch.

Temby said that today’s launch is significant and underscores FNU’s commitment to supporting its staff and students in all their diversities. This would create more inclusiveness and a growing environment in which everyone can thrive, learn, and contribute towards the University.



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Nakauvadra Draws Inspiration from Ratu Sukuna's Approach to Leadership



FNU students with the President of the Fijian Teachers Association, Netani Druavesi, academics and staff of Natabua Campus in Lautoka.

By NICOLETTE CHAMBERS

FIJI National University student, Meli Tanuku Nakauvadra says, as a leader in his community, he is grateful that his lessons learnt on the topic of ‘leadership’, was inspired from one of Fiji’s greatest – Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.

This follows the two-day Ratu Sukuna Celebration held at the FNU’s Natabua Campus in Lautoka. The Bachelor of Arts (Education) in Counselling student, said Ratu Sukuna’s dedication to serving his people above his own interests, taught him the importance of putting the needs of others before his own.

Nakauvadra said he also strived to emulate the same quality by being responsive to the needs of his community and working towards making a positive impact for all the families.

“Ratu Sukuna’s visionary leadership has also influenced my approach to problem-solving,” he said. “His ability to think beyond the present moment and envision a brighter future has inspired me to think creatively and proactively about the challenges my community faces.

“I have learned to seek out innovative solutions and collaborate with others to achieve common goals.”

FNU’s Pro-Vice-Chancellor TVET, Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata, who officiated at the final day of the two-day celebrations, shared sentiments that educators and future educators need to learn from the life of Ratu Sukuna and implement it into their daily lives.

“Listening to his great achievements in life and the sacrifices made, tough decisions he had to make for the benefit of his country, which he loved, makes me a proud Fijian, and you should feel the same way too,” he said.

He said Ratu Sukuna’s commitment to all Fijians and Fiji, would continue to inspire future generations.

The President of the Fijian Teachers Association, Netani Druavesi, was the chief guest of the first day of celebrations.

In his address, Druavesi mentioned that Ratu Sukuna did not show signs of giving up and suggested that everyone adapt to how he lived his life.

“He did more than anybody to lay the groundwork for self-governance by fostering the development of modern institutions in Fiji,” he said.

Magele Ready to Fight NCDs

By PRAVIN NARAIN

ANALOSA Manuele Magele, the principal nutritionist at the Ministry of Health in Samoa, has advanced her expertise to better combat non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Samoa and the Pacific region. Recently, she earned a Postgraduate Diploma in Human Nutrition from Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Sciences (CMNHS).

Magele pursued a Postgraduate Diploma in Human Nutrition.

"The Postgraduate Diploma in Human Nutrition is a new programme offered by FNU in 2022, and all nutritionists and dietitians in the Pacific were encouraged to take it as part of capacity building and professional development," she said.

"NCDs are rising in the country and the Pacific as well, so we need to equip ourselves better so we can stand and help our people."

"The programme has broadened the skills and knowledge needed to address nutrition deficiencies, promote better health, develop national interventions, and inform national policies in Samoa to reduce the burden of NCDs."

The achievement was extra special for Magele, as she missed out on her Postgraduate Certificate in Health Research graduation in December 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions, but she walked up the stage this time to receive her award.

Magele said she was grateful to have graduated as it was not a smooth journey, especially since she was trying to balance her family commitments, busy work life, studies, and competing priorities.

"Today is a testimony of all the sacrifices, determination, and perseverance needed to finish the race."

"I acknowledge God, for he has been my light in times of uncertainty, a beacon of hope, and has made everything possible. At the same time, I am also grateful for the unwavering support of my family, my husband, and everyone else who has been part of this journey. I continue to praise the Lord while maintaining my humility.

"My grandparents are my biggest inspiration in life. Growing up, I witnessed their struggles, and it was through their struggles that I am where I am today. They have been my pillars of strength throughout my educational journey."



Analosa Manuele Magele.

“NCDs are rising in the country and the Pacific as well, so we need to equip ourselves better so we can stand and help our people.”

Ni-Van Student's Three-Year Sacrifice to Study at FNU Pays Off

By JENNIS NAIDU

FROM the distant shores of Vanuatu, Robson Iarapia's curiosity in science and eagerness to know more about basal disease in plants led him to enrol in Fiji National University's College of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry (CAFF).

Enduring three years away from home had been a challenging journey for Iarapia, and now he is brimming with excitement to return home and apply his newfound skills for the betterment of his beloved country.

The 26-year-old from Tanna Island was overjoyed to receive his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at the 2024 April graduation ceremony.

"I feel overjoyed to be graduating today. It was hard being away from home for three years studying in a foreign country, and all the hard work I put in has paid off," the Ni-Vanuatu student said.

"As a child, I was always fascinated by science, and I used to stay back in the lab, wanting to know more and more.

"While I was in the lab, I was engrossed in the wonders of science, and it made me think and research further, and I thought the best way to answer my questions that my mind and research could not do was to study at FNU.

"I also wanted to study and learn more about basal disease in plants, and I thought what better way than to do that than study agriculture; know the causes and the practices to prevent the fungal disease from causing rot in plants.

"I chose FNU to follow my dream of being an entomologist or a pathologist to study disease in plants to help in the development of my country."

Despite his parents not being present for his graduation ceremony in Suva, Iarapia could not stop smiling in his blue graduation gown.

"I am very happy and am overwhelmed with emotions!" he exclaimed.

"This is for my parents back home in Vanuatu. My parents are back at home; they could not be here for my graduation today due to some financial difficulties. However, I am happy, and I hope they are happy too.

He acknowledged the support of the lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic, when classes transitioned to being delivered virtually.

"Being a man of science, I enjoy being in the lab, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the classes were delivered online, but the support I received from the lecturers really helped me a lot in my journey to graduation," he explained.

"I recommend FNU to all the students who wish to study further, back at home, about agriculture.

“I chose FNU to follow my dream of being an entomologist or a pathologist to study disease in plants to help in the development of my country.”



Robson Iarapia beaming with joy at the April 2024 graduation ceremony.

Masi, a Role Model for Many Students

By **PRAVIN NARAIN**

IOSEFO Masi, a prominent Swire Shipping Fijian Drua player, recently achieved a remarkable feat. He was recognised as the Times Sports Players' Player of the Year 2024 and Fiji Airways Men's Player of the Year Award at the Drua Awards night for stellar performance in the 2024 Super Rugby season.

This recognition holds particular significance for Masi, a distinguished alumnus of Fiji National University (FNU). He successfully completed his Bachelor of Science in Forestry, showcasing his multifaceted talents.

FNU's Vice-Chancellor Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba expressed the university's immense pride in Masi's accomplishments and commended him for setting a good example for other students.

"FNU is firmly committed to supporting our students throughout their academic and personal endeavours. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Iosefo for his achievements on and off the field."

Masi, who hails from Taveuni, has become a role model for students of all ages. He began his secondary school educational journey at Holy Cross College and subsequently transitioned to Suva Grammar School in 2016. In 2017, he continued his studies at Nasinu Secondary School, where he actively participated in rugby league for the school.

While pursuing his academic goals at FNU, Masi's commitment to the North Queensland Cowboys in the Australian National Rugby League (NRL) prevented him from attending his graduation ceremony.

Professor Nabobo-Baba emphasised FNU's dedication to fostering well-rounded individuals.

"At FNU, we actively encourage our students to excel not only in academic pursuits but also in co-

curricular activities such as sports. Iosefo Masi embodies this philosophy perfectly," she stated.

"His exceptional talent and dedication on the rugby field have brought immense honour to Fiji National University and the entire nation. Fiji is renowned for its passionate rugby fanbase, and everyone here fervently supports the Fijian Drua and Iosefo. He has undoubtedly become a true role model for countless students."

The 26-year-old played a pivotal role in securing Fiji's second Olympic gold medal in Rugby Sevens at the 2020 Games under coach Gareth Baber. He continued his winning streak by contributing significantly to Fiji's triumph at the 2022 Rugby World Cup Sevens, where they secured a thrilling 29-12 victory over New Zealand in the final, which was held in South Africa.

Masi said he was thrilled to have won the award.

"I feel honoured to receive these awards. Firstly, I thank God for giving me talent and my family for their continuous support."

Receiving these awards and knowing that the managers, coaches, and my brothers voted for me is a humbling experience, knowing that they could have voted for someone else, but I was chosen," he said.

"These awards have encouraged me to be better and push myself even more for the sport that I've always loved and enjoyed playing."

"I encourage all the young people to continue to pursue their dreams. Whatever field of work or sport you're interested in, continue to work hard at it till you achieve it. Never doubt yourself, and always believe in yourself. Most importantly, continue to trust in God with everything and anything."

The season has ended, but your Fijian Drua will come back bigger and better next season!"



Iosefo Masi. Picture - Fijian Drua.



FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY



FNU Gym Opening Hours

Monday to Friday, 5am to 9pm
Saturday, 6am to 6pm
Sunday, 6am to 2pm
Public Holiday, 6am to 2pm

Multi-Purpose Court Operating Hours

Monday to Thursday, 5am to 9pm
Friday, 5am to 10pm
Saturday, 6am to 10pm
Sunday, 6am to 6pm
Public Holiday, 6am to 6pm

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INSIDE FNU wants to HEAR FROM YOU

INSIDE FNU welcomes submissions by staff and students for publication in the newsletter. Please send your suggestions, comments or articles for consideration to mprc@fnu.ac.fj

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